

Ornithological Literature

Edited by William E. Davis, Jr.

SWALLOW SUMMER. By Charles R. Brown. Univ. Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska. 1998: xiii + 371 pp., black-and-white photographs. \$16.95 (paper).—For the past 15 years, Charles R. Brown and his wife Mary have studied Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) at Cedar Point Biological Station in the Sand Hills of western Nebraska. The Browns' research was (and continues to be) highly productive, partly because the swallows proved to be excellent research material. Cliff Swallows make mud nests in colonies that may range from a few birds to thousands. The swallows are relatively easy to capture (but provide the basis for many adventures) and are tolerant of extensive handling. Their natural history is relevant to numerous issues in the basic ecology of birds and to the understanding group behavior of animals.

This book is a non-scientific account of how the Browns came to work on this bird and the trials and tribulations of one season of their studies. Each year they arrive in Nebraska in May in advance of the first swallows. They capture, band, weigh, and measure birds until the swallows stop breeding in late July. With the help of numerous assistants, they have obtained data from thousands of swallows. In fact, their total sample size for some measurements must be in six figures!

The writing is clear, funny, insightful, interesting, and informative. If you have more than a passing interest in swallows, group behavior, or basic avian ecology, you should also read the scientific account, "Coloniality in the Cliff Swallow: the effect of group size on social behavior" (co-authored with Mary Brown; 1996, Univ. Chicago Press), if you have not already done so.

Prairie thunderstorms, clouds of birds, the mysteries of bird behavior, quotes from western movies (especially from "Lonesome Dove"!), the deep pleasures of spending the summer at a field station, the behavior of field assistants, the dirt/frustration/exhaustion of long days in the field, the satisfaction of discovery—these are just a few of the rich

threads in the texture of Brown's account. If you have worked for a long time on one species, spent a summer with students at a field station, love western Nebraska, have struggled to fund and run a field research project, or simply would enjoy a good account of how field ornithologists see the world, you will appreciate this book.—CHARLES R. BLEM.

ATLAS OF BREEDING BIRDS OF INDIANA. By John S. Castrale, Edward M. Hopkins, and Charles E. Keller. Available from: Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Customer Service Center, 402 W. Washington St., Rm. W160, Indianapolis, IN 46204. 1998: 388 pp., 14 numbered text figs., 7 tables, 158 range maps. \$20 plus \$3.50 s&h, \$1 sales tax for Indiana residents (cloth).—The Indiana Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources sponsored this atlas project, coordinating the nearly 600 volunteers and paid "block busters" during the fieldwork conducted from 1985–1990. Workers targeted 647 "priority blocks," west-central of the six blocks of each U.S. Geological Survey 7½' topographic map of the state. A series of maps depict counties, public lands, rivers, urban areas, natural regions, forested areas (with separate maps for evergreen-deciduous and shrubland-early successional woodlands), agricultural row-crops, pastureland, and marshes and open water. In an attempt to provide some indices of abundance, atlas accounts used Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Summer Bird Count (SBC) data for the 1985–1990 period. The SBC uses the county as the sampling area, and counts are conducted on multiple days during June. A table lists in rank order the percentage of blocks in which a species was detected (e.g., American Robin, *Turdus migratorius*, 100%, rank = 1), abundance values and rank for BBS routes, and birds/party hour and rank for SBCs.

A biogeographic analysis by J. Dan Web-